

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9870

C O N F I D E N T I A L EXDIS BUENOS AIRES 0977

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, US, XM

SUBJ: VIGNES ON POSTPONEMENT OF BA MFM AND SECRETARY

KISSINGERS VISIT.

1. I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES EVENING FEB 7 AT HIS REQUEST.
HE HANDED ME TEXT OF HIS REPLY TO SECRETARY KISSINGER'S MOST RECENT
LETTER AND REQUESTED THAT I TRANSMIT IT,THOUGH HE ALSO ASKING ARGENTINE

EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO DELIVER IT.

2. VIGNES NOTED THAT HE HAD NOT HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH
ME HIS RETIONALE IN DRAFTING COMMUNIQUE POSTPONING BA MFM AND WISHED
TO DO SO NOW. HE HAD, HE SAID, TO KEEP THREE FACTORS IN MIND:
A) HIS INTERNAL POLITICAL FRONT; B) THAT HE NOT APPEAR TO BE AGREEING
WITH THE POSITION OF VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR, OR, STILL LESS, TO BE
FOLLOWING LEADERSHIP OF VENEZUELA; AND C) THAT HE HAVE APPROVAL OF ALL

OAS COUNTRIES. WITH INTERNAL POLITICAL FRONT IN MIND, HE HAD HAD
NO CHOICE BUT TO MENTION TRA AS FACTOR WHICH HAD LED TO "LACK OF UNITY"

HAD HE DONE OTHERWISE, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN LABELLED A STOOGE AND PROBABLY

WOULD HAVE LOST HIS JOB AS WELL AS HIS USEFULNESS. BECAUSE OF SECOND
POINT HE HAD NOT WISHED TO MENTION IN COMMUNIQUE ATTITUDES OF VENEZUELA

AND ECUADOR. TO HAVE DONE SO IN NEGATIVE OR CRITICAL VEIN WOULD HAVE
SIMPLY GOT THEIR HACKLES UP, YET HE COULD NOT REFER TO THEIR POSITONS

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IN ANY OTHER WAY WITHOUT SUGGESTING THAT ARGENTINA AGREED WITH THEM,

WHICH IT OF COURSE DID NOT. HE NOTED THAT MRS. PERON HAD REPLIED TO MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT PEREZ OF VENEZUELA BY SAYING THAT IN ARGENTINE VIEW IT ALWAYS BETTER TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS FRANKLY AND THAT INTERNATIONAL FORA SUCH AS THE BA MFM WERE THE APPROPRIATE PLACE TO CARRY ON SUCH DISCUSSIONS.

3. VIGNES INDICATED THAT HE HAD HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO REFER TO OAS RESOLUTION IN POSTPONEMENT COMMUNIQUE. BEFORE ISSUING COMMUNIQUE HE HAD CONSULTED BY PHONE WITH MOST OF THE OTHER FOREIGN MINISTERS, WHOSE APPROVAL HE NEEDED. HE COULD NOT HAVE GOT THAT APPROVAL WITHOUT

INCLUDING SOME REFERENCE IN COMMUNIQUE TO THE OAS RESOLUTION. OTHERWISE,

SEVERAL WOULD HAVE REFUSED TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH THE ARGENTINE COMMUNIQUE AND MIGHT HAVE ISSUED THEIR OWN MUCH STRONGER STATEMENTS. ANYWAY, VIGNES CONCLUDED, RESOLUTION WAS A REALITY WHICH COULD NOT BE IGNORED IN PRESENT HEMISPHERIC POLITICAL EQUATION.

4. VIGNES CONCLUDED THAT HE HAD HAD TO WALK A FINE LINE IN DRAFTING COMMUNIQUE AND OBVIOUSLY NOT EVERYONE WOULD BE ALTOGETHER HAPPY WITH IT. HE HOPED US HAD UNDERSTOOD HIS POSITION. WHETHER OR NOT USG

FULLY AGREED WITH TERMS OF COMMUNIQUE, HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED IT WOULD AGREE THAT POSTPONEMENT HAD BEEN BEST COURSE. INDEED, HE HAD CONSULTED

WITH US AS WITH LA FOREIGN MINISTERS AND HAD UNDERSTOOD BEFORE HE ISSUED COMMUNIQUE THAT US DID FAVOR POSTPONEMENT.

5. TURNING TO SUBJECT OF HIS LETTER TO SECRETARY KISSINGER (TEXT OF WHICH IS TRANSMITTED BY SEPTTEL), VIGNES SAID POSTPONEMENT OF SECRETARY'S TRIP CREATED NO PROBLEMS. GOA HAD RATHER EXPECTED THAT SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST WOULD LEAD TO POSTPONEMENT. HE QUICKLY COMMENTED HOWEVER, THAT HE HOPED SECRETARY COULD MAKE TRIP IN MARCH RATHER THAN APRIL. BUT THE MAIN POINT HE STRESSED WAS THAT THE SECRETARY COME. SHOULD SECRETARY NOT COME AT ALL, US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS WOULD SUFFER SERIOUS REVERSE AND IT WOULD TAKE HIM A LONG TIME TO RECREATE THE PRESENT FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE IN ARGENTINA FOR CLOSER RELATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. INDEED, VIGNES NOTED WRYLY, HE PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY

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TO BE OF ANY FURTHER USE. "IF SECRETARY KISSINGER DOES NOT COME, I AM DEAD POLITICALLY," HE SAID FRANKLY US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS AND HIS OWN PERSONAL POSITION ASIDE, HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED OPINION THAT THAT NEW DIALOGUE WOULD SUFFER BLOW FROM WHICH IT MIGHT NOT RECOVER SHOULD SECRETARY KISSINGER NOT VISIT SOUTH AMERICA AS HE HAS PROMISED. DESPITE POSTPONEMENT OF MFM, AND HE BELIEVED MOST OF THE OTHER FOREIGN MINISTERS, REGARD THE NEW DIALOGUE AS ONGOING.

MOST, HOWEVER, WOULD INTERPRET CANCELLATION OF SECRETARY'S PROPOSED TRIP AS INDICATION THAT US HAS LOST INTEREST.

6. ON OTHER HAND, VIGNES NOTED, NEW DIALOGUE COULD BE GIVEN RENEWED VIGOR AND THE WHOLE ATMOSPHERE MUCH IMPROVED BY SECRETARY'S VISIT. PEOPLE OF ARGENTINA WERE WAITING TO GIVE SECRETARY WARM WELCOME AND HE FELT PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE TRIP WOULD DO MUCH TO GET APRIL OAS MEETING OFF TO GOOD START AND THE MFM BACK ON TRACK. VIGNES NOTED SITUATIONS IN VENEZUELA AND PERU AND COMMENTED THAT SHOULD

IT PROVE NECESSARY TO STRIKE THOSE TWO COUNTRIES FROM THE SECRETARY'S ITINERARY, HE WOULD SUGGEST COLOMBIA AS A SUBSTITUTE. HE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED AGAINST INCLUSION OF URUGUAY SINCE THAT WOULD GREATLY DILUTE IMPACT OF VISIT ON THE 26 MILLION ARGENTINES.

7 IN PARTING, VIGNES ASKED THAT I EXTEND HIS WARMEST GREETINGS TO SECRETARY KISSINGER AND TO ASSURE LATTER THAT HIS RESPECT AND FRIENDSHIP HAVE NEVER WAVERED.

8. OF ALL MY MEETINGS SO FAR WITH VIGNES, HE WAS IN THIS ONE THE MOST CORDIAL AND FRANK, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THE MOST INSISTENT THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER'S COMMITMENT TO VISIT ARGENTINA BE MET. HE INDICATED THAT MRS. PERON WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND A CANCELLATION. HILL

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